

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace Paragraph [0006] (the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 12) with the following rewritten paragraph:

To address these issues, a first aspect of the invention provides a method for executing a ~~noise~~ noise reduction process in digital images. The method in the first aspect of the invention comprises detecting the edges contained in an image, determining the orientation that is the direction in which the detected edges are formed, and applying a smoothing filter to the detected edges, wherein the smoothing filter has an extraction area in the same direction as the determined edge orientation.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 26 (the last paragraph on page 8), with the following rewritten paragraph:

Figures 4(a)-4(b) ~~Figure 4 illustrates~~ illustrate an example of 3 x 3 edge detection operators used to determine the edge gradient g (edge level).

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 1 (the first paragraph on page 9), with the following rewritten paragraph:

Figures 5(a)-5(b) ~~Figure 5 illustrates~~ illustrate an example of 5 x 5 edge detection operators used to determine the edge gradient g (edge level).

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 3 (the second paragraph on page 9), with the following rewritten paragraph:

Figures 6(a)-6(h) ~~Figure 6 illustrates~~ illustrate an example of an elliptical median filter with the orientation of the reference pixel extraction area used in this embodiment.

Please replace Paragraph [0038] (the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 15) with the following rewritten paragraph:

A digital style camera 30 is connected as an imaging device to serve as the external input device. The digital style camera 30 is an imaging device which produces image data using a photoelectric transducer such as a CCD. Photographed images are formed through an optical lens onto a CCD, where the optical information (energy) is converted to electrical information (energy). It is thus known that noise tends to be produced in the resulting images of night ~~sense~~ scenes or indoor scenes where there is not enough light. When images are photographed by increasing the ISO, the noise level is also known to increase. Image data produced by digital style cameras 30 can also be input through a memory card MC to a personal computer PC.